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Curriculum Ideas for Teachers

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Using the Newspaper to Teach English as a Second Language

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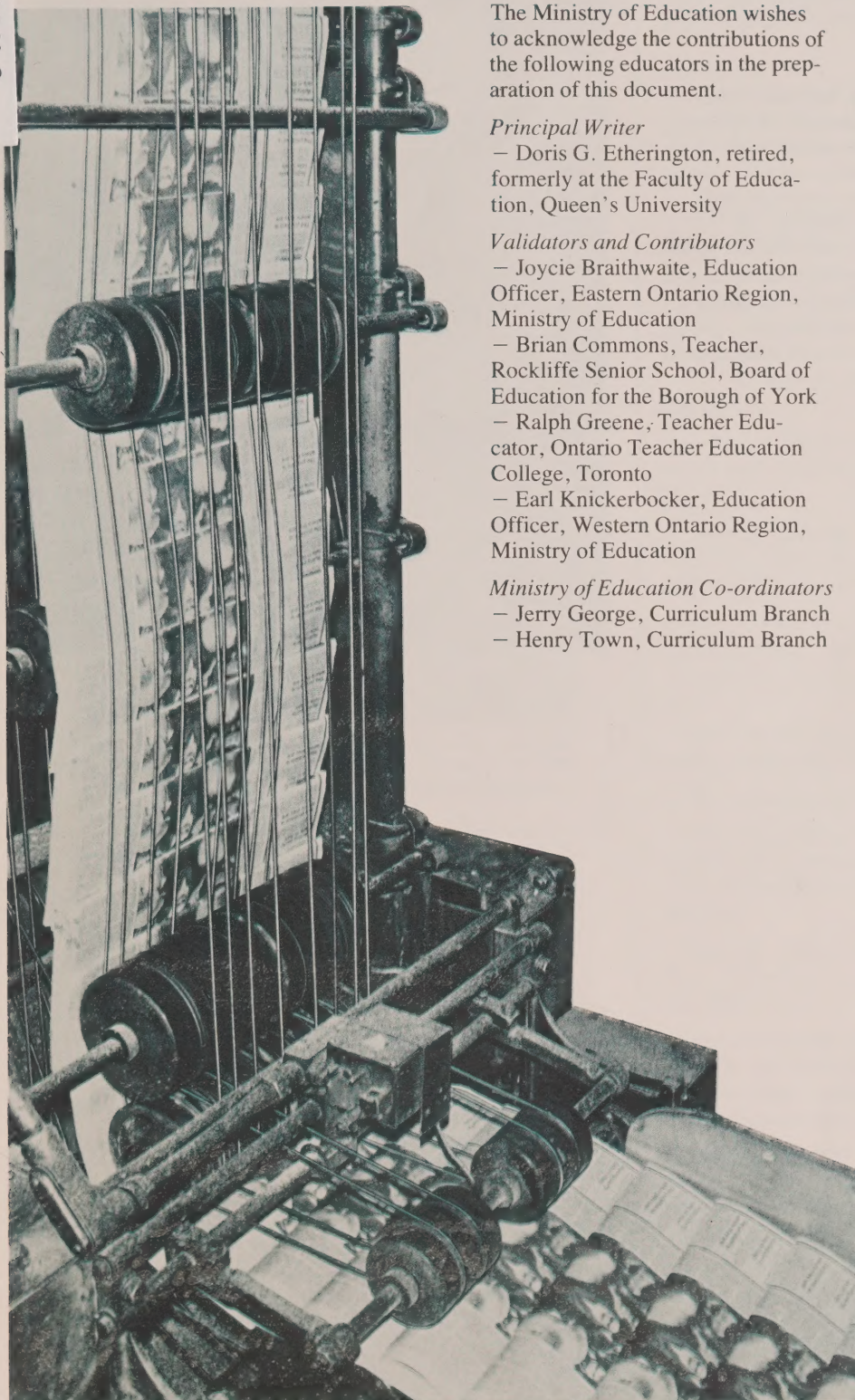
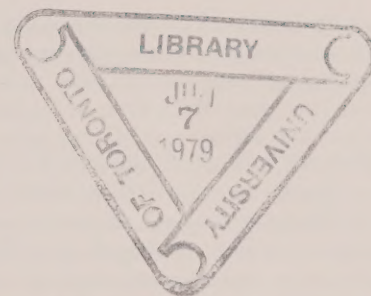
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Introduction

Newspapers are an excellent source of language activities for students of English as a second language. They offer a wide variety of topics at varying levels of difficulty and are relatively inexpensive. Students of all ages and levels of fluency may profit from activities generated by newspapers. Moreover, all subjects of the curriculum may be explored through newspapers.

When choosing material from a newspaper to teach oral or written language skills, set clear objectives, which are capable of being achieved in the time available. At the same time, use approaches that are sufficiently flexible to accommodate the interests and needs of each student. This support document offers specific examples of objectives and approaches that fit these criteria.

The examples that follow are necessarily limited in focus and in scope and are intended only as examples of starting points. You will recognize that the "first attempts [of students] to express themselves in English in no way represent their highest level of conceptual development" (*English as a Second Language/Dialect*, 1977, p. 5). Ensure that the language experiences of your students move beyond pattern drilling and the attainment of a basic comprehension level. In order to attain English-language fluency, every student must have early and frequent opportunities to understand English and to gain competence in using it in many ways and for a variety of purposes.



Primary Division

Using Newspaper Pictures

Newspaper pictures can be used with all children to stimulate oral conversation and writing activities. You can ask questions based on the pictures, to which the children respond, with those who are fluent in English adding details. Children can make up stories to fit each picture, speculating on what might have happened before the picture was taken and on what will happen after.

Example 1.

Objectives:

- Children will learn the names of the objects in the pictures they are shown.
- Children will learn simple question-and-answer patterns and the progressive form of the present tense.



Mike Hastings' shutout gave Rockcliffe Public School a 6-0 win over Fairbank PS in the Borough of York junior softball championships at Keelesdale yesterday. Page 33.

Globe and Mail, Toronto

Procedure: Ask the following questions:

- Who is this? (A boy. This is a boy.)
- What is this? (A ball. This is a ball.)
- What is the boy holding? (The boy is holding a ball.)
- I am holding a ball. What am I holding? (You are holding a ball.)
- What is the boy throwing? (The boy is throwing a ball.)
- The boy is playing with a ball. What is the boy playing with? (The boy is playing with a ball.)

Additionally, you could ask the ESL/D child to name the same articles in another picture. The other children could be asked to fill in details. Again, children could draw pictures of the same articles and paste them in the newspaper they are making. You can then print a story underneath each picture.

Example 2.

Objective: Children will learn the concepts "more than", "less than", "in front of", "in", "on", "behind".

Procedure:

- Let the children count the number of objects in a picture.
- Ask questions such as "What object is in front of _____?", "Behind _____?".
- Have the children compare two pictures in response to such questions as "Are there more children in this picture than in that one?"

Example 3.

Objective: Children will recognize and understand words they read.

Procedure:

- Cut out headline words that are familiar to the children and have the children draw pictures in squares to match the words they choose from an envelope filled with the headline words.

- The following game is based on the pictures the children have drawn in the foregoing activity.

The pictures are placed in sequence horizontally with "Starting Point" and "Finishing Point" indicated. The children select a word and advance to the space containing the picture that relates to the word chosen.

Example 4.

Objective: Children will understand specific concepts and words used in advertisements.

Procedure:

- Have the children cut out pictures of and name foods that they like or that they see at home. Print the names underneath each picture.
- The children can play store with the pictures, practising sentence patterns such as: "I want two cans of . . ."; "Please give me . . ."; "Thank you"; "How much do they cost?"
- Have the children match real products with advertisements, using taste, touch, and smell.
- Have them match real products and prices.
- Have the children make comparisons among products in terms of price, quantity, and size. The concepts of "more", "less", "smaller", "bigger", etc., can be developed in this way.
- Have the children cut out pictures of their favourite foods. Help them to name each product, describe it, and tell why they like it.
- Have each child choose a picture and print a description under it; one child can then read his/her description aloud, while the other children listen to the description and then ask questions about the product or guess what it is.
- Have the children choose furniture for bedrooms, living rooms, kitchens, etc., from advertisements and then cut and paste the pictures to design their own rooms.
- Children can also be asked to choose clothes, toys, animals, or people and classify these (clothes in terms of colour, size, price, or material; toys in terms of preference, price, or use; animals in terms of kind, habitat, or size; and people in terms of physical or social qualities).

Using Picture Stories

Example 1.

In Primary grades, the following story could be read aloud:

Jeremy, the Seal That Won't Swim

Jeremy's mother, Chinny, wants him to learn to swim, but Jeremy doesn't want to. When Jeremy was ready to learn, his pool wasn't ready. Now he likes the warm sunlight on land better than the cold water in the pool. When his mother tries to push him into the pool, he pushes her away and squeals loudly. He will have to learn, though.

Whoever heard of a seal that couldn't swim?

Objectives: Children will be given opportunities to practise and learn:

- question patterns
- comparisons (e.g., like – dislike)
- verb tenses (present, past, future)
- negative contractions



The seal that wouldn't swim – that's Jeremy, born four weeks ago at the Metro Toronto Zoo and yet to take to water . . . despite his mother's best efforts to coax and cajole. Page 4.

Globe and Mail, Toronto

Procedure: Ask the children questions such as the following:

- What did Chinny want Jeremy to do?
- What does Jeremy like to do more?
- What will he have to learn?

Vocabulary related to location or position, time, and quantity can also be taught using this procedure.

Example 2.

Picture stories such as the one below can be used to encourage the children's oral-language development.

Objectives: Children will be given opportunities to practise and learn:

- question patterns
- how to read a picture
- factual recall



First day blues

Principal William Jackson comforts David Duncan, 4, in the junior kindergarten room of Three Valleys Road Public School in Don Mills. It was David's first day at school. Teacher, Mrs. Susanne Gordon, is holding his hand.

Courtesy Newcomer News

Procedure: Have the children answer questions such as the following:

- How does the little boy feel?
- What is David saying?
- What is the principal saying?
- Why is Mr. Jackson crouching?
- How is his teacher helping David?
- What is Mrs. Gordon thinking?

Through questions such as these, the children's developing conceptual framework is enlarged.

Junior Division

Many of the suggestions for the Primary Division are appropriate for the Junior Division as well. Pictures of sports equipment and other objects, as well as maps and diagrams, can be mounted on file cards. Print, or have the students print, the names of objects underneath the pictures or on separate cards. The cards can then be used in matching games and for review. Not only can newspaper pictures be used in drill activities, but children can bring in pictures of their families as well, and these can be used for similar purposes. Sentences like the following might be developed in the course of such an activity:

- This is my family.
- We come from . . .
- My name is . . .
- My father's name is . . .
- My mother's name is . . .
- My brother's name is . . .
- My sister's name is . . .
- We are a small (large, medium-sized) family. (Family sizes can be compared.)
- We live in a house (an apartment).
- We came to Canada in a plane (by boat).

A picture story such as the following can be an interesting source of language activity and practice.

Objectives: Children will be given opportunities to practise and learn:

- question patterns
- how to read a picture or text
- factual recall

A budding musician



Globe and Mail, Toronto

Procedure:

Read the following story to the children:

Emanuel Da Costa is six years old. His father plays the tuba in a Portuguese band in Toronto. When the members of the band took a break, Emanuel tried to play the tuba. He tried many times and finally produced several notes.

After reading the story to the children, ask them to look at the picture and answer these questions:

1. Is Emanuel wearing a sweater?
2. What kind is it, a pullover or a cardigan?
3. Is he wearing a cap?
4. Is he wearing short pants?
5. Do you play a musical instrument?

Following these questions, children might point out various parts of Emanuel's body, and of their own bodies: hair, forehead, eyebrows, eyes, ear, nose, cheeks, chin, neck, shoulder, arm, elbow, wrist, thumb, finger, knuckles, knee, leg.

Junior and Intermediate Divisions

The sports pages of newspapers carry accounts of games (e.g., soccer) that many ESL/D children understand and find interesting. A specific reading skill, such as the noting of details, as well as oral fluency can be developed when children read such accounts and answer questions such as the following:

- What are the names of the two teams?
- What was the final score?
- How many goals did each team score?
- Who scored the winning goal?
- Where was the game played?
- Which team scored more goals?
- Which team scored fewer goals?

Children could be encouraged to write personal accounts of the game and to describe the game orally to the rest of the class.

Using a Simple Recipe

Objectives: Children will be given opportunities to practise and learn:

- expressions of quantity
- ordinal numbers
- comparisons

Procedure: Display on an overhead projector, write on the chalkboard, or duplicate the following recipe:

Lemon Consommé

Two cans of beef consommé
An equal quantity of water
The juice and rind of one lemon
Paper-thin slices of lemon

Heat consommé, water, lemon juice, and lemon rind and simmer 5 minutes. Ladle into soup cups and float a slice of lemon on each. (Serves 6.)

Courtesy Toronto Star

Ask the children the following questions about the recipe:

- What are the ingredients?
- Which do you put in first? Second?
- Is more water or consommé used?
- How much water is used?
- How much lemon juice is needed?
- Which ingredient do you use more of – lemon juice or water?
- How many people does this recipe serve?
- What does the consommé taste like?
- What would you need to buy to make this recipe?
- How much would it cost?

Students could then be encouraged to bring in recipes of their own. They could use these to practise their questioning skills. Organizing and classifying skills could be improved if the students assembled their recipes in a class cookbook.

Using the Comic Section

Undoubtedly the comics, one of the most popular sections of the newspaper, can be used in a variety of ways to encourage language development, both oral and written. Students can explain what is happening in a comic strip. Words used in some of the boxes can be covered, and the children can write in their own versions of what is being said. Where no words appear, children can suggest them.

Objective: Children will be given opportunities to interpret, orally or in writing, stories told in comic strips.

Procedure: Display the following comic strip on the overhead projector and ask questions such as the following:

- What did the customer ask the ice cream vendor?
- What did the ice cream man answer?
- What was the customer doing?
- Why was he surprised?
- What happened to the ice cream vendor?

Using a Picture Story for Beginners With Some English

Objective: Children will be given opportunities to formulate oral or written questions and to use these questions in “real” situations.

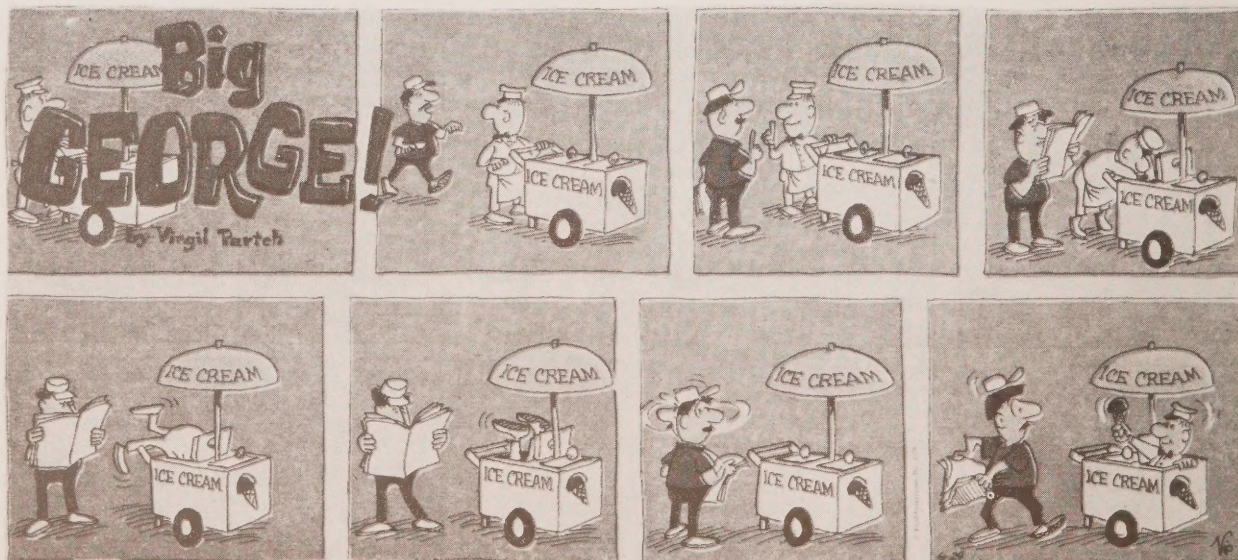
Procedure: Ask the children to pretend that they are reporters and to make up a series of questions they would like to ask about the picture and story below. They could then carry out simulated interviews, with one child playing the part of a reporter, and another the part of the owner of the cat.

Stranger in the yard



This cat's name is Pierre. He lives in Kingston. One morning he woke up and found a giant snow cat in his yard. He touched it, sniffed it and licked it. Then he ignored it.

Courtesy Kingston Whig-Standard



Courtesy Toronto Star

Junior, Intermediate, and Senior Divisions

Feature articles such as the one that follows can be used in a variety of ways to promote language fluency. Such articles appear in most daily newspapers on a regular basis, and there are usually a great many similar stories in the weekend editions of such newspapers.

Objective: Students will be given practice in noting details, making inferences, exploring differences in verb tenses, and making generalizations about forming plurals.

Procedure: Students read the following article and answer the questions on it:

How we got the name Canada

There are many theories about the origin of the name Canada, but there is little doubt that the word is an Indian one.

When Jacques Cartier sailed up the St. Lawrence River in 1534 to the Indian village of Stadacona (now Quebec) he heard the village called "Kanata". He believed that to be the name of the country. However, in some Huron dialects, "kanata" means a settlement or a village. In the Mohawk language, a similar word means simply "a place".

In Cartier's map of the St. Lawrence, he put the name Canada on the area between the Saguenay River and what is now Quebec City. The area upstream from that was called "Hochelaga". Below the Saguenay, the area was called by the Indian name "Saguenay".

The 16th century mapmaker, Mercator, used the name New France for the French colony along the St. Lawrence. But Dutch and English mapmakers gave that name to all French colonies in the New World. After the English conquest of the French colony of Acadia in 1713, the name Canada was used for the whole St. Lawrence colony and not just a part of it.

After the British victory on the Plains of Abraham in 1759, the name Quebec started to be

used for the entire French territory along the St. Lawrence. This name was used until 1791 when the British Parliament passed the Canada Act. This Act created a new colony called Upper Canada (now Ontario) and gave the name Lower Canada to what is now called Quebec.

From this time, the name Canada was used for the joint territory occupied by the two territories.

The Act of Union, passed in London in 1840, united the two colonies into the Province of Canada, with Upper Canada renamed Canada West, and Lower Canada becoming Canada East.

This system remained until Confederation in 1867, when the name Canada was applied to the four provinces that joined together, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario.

Eventually the other provinces joined Confederation: Manitoba in 1870, British Columbia in 1871, Prince Edward Island in 1873, the two prairie provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta in 1905, and finally Newfoundland in 1949.

Thus the name Canada spread from a small community on the St. Lawrence to embrace half a continent. From sea to sea and from the 49th parallel to the North Pole.

Additional student activities that might be developed from this article include:

- dramatizing the dialogue Cartier might have had with his men about the name of the country;
- writing what he might have written about it in his diary;
- drawing a picture based on the article;
- changing the verbs in the past tense in the article to the present tense;
- doing research on a place name and reporting their findings.

In later lessons, students could be asked to cut stories and pictures from newspapers, then separate the headlines from the stories and the captions from the pictures. Working in pairs or in small groups, the students could attempt to match up the headlines or captions with the appropriate stories or pictures.

A simple newspaper article such as the one that follows could be used to help students make generalizations about how plurals are commonly formed in English. Students could be asked to:

- find the plurals of "son", "car", "furnace", "gas", "hose", "tank";
- formulate a rule for forming plurals;
- test the rule by looking for plurals in another article.

. . . Sea Power

Edward Leitz and his two sons invented a process that will run cars and furnaces on gases produced from sea salt. They get oxygen and hydrogen from the salt water. Then they put this gas into the carburetor of a 1974 four-cylinder car. The car engine runs on the gas.

Hoses connect the carburetor to small tanks of salt water at the side of the car. The car will not move until they find a way to recharge the batteries.

In a test, the car ran for less than a minute on the hydrogen gas, but did not move.

Courtesy *Newcomer News*

- Why does the writer say there is little doubt that the word "Canada" is Indian in origin?
- How would Cartier have heard the word "Kanata"?
- Why do you think the name changed from "Kanata" to "Canada"?
- Why did the country develop gradually from one colony to a union of ten provinces, rather than all ten parts joining together at one time?

Courtesy *Newcomer News*

Using Advertisements

Newspaper advertisements can be collected and mounted on cardboard with a variety of suggested language activities. For example:

Objective: Students will be given practice in making comparisons and classifying objects, and will have opportunities to develop their vocabulary.

Procedure: Ask students to:

- prepare the menu for the restaurant pictured below;
- name and describe the foods that would be on the menu;
- describe the food so that others would want to eat there;
- assign prices to menu items;
- estimate the total cost of a meal;
- compare items on the menu to determine which would be the most costly.

Additionally, advertisements showing fruit, vegetables, and manufactured products could be put to use by having students match the products with the countries that produced them.



Using Other Sections of the Newspaper

Weather maps from newspapers could not only help to develop scientific concepts, but could also be used to give students practice with the past, present, and future tenses of verbs.

Editorials may be used with the students who have some fluency in English to help them recognize persuasive language and point of view. Want ads can provide valuable models of precise and concise language, and can be starting points for stories or dramatizations.

Many of the activities presented in this document can be followed up by having students produce their own newspaper. When they have had opportunities to identify the who, what, where, when, and why in newspaper stories, they will be more able to use a similar format in producing their own stories. The sharing of customs through newspaper stories, recipes, letters to the editor, and cartoons not only helps students develop language fluency, but also increases their appreciation of our multicultural society.

Although the activities suggested in this support document have been categorized by divisions, they can be adapted to suit a variety of levels. Teachers are encouraged to extend the simple suggestions given here and to promote a multiplicity of language activities in an enriched and sympathetic environment.

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